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Security Council

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Identical letters dated 22 June 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I am writing to alert you to the fact that a group that calls itself the Freedom Flotilla Coalition is headed towards the Gaza Strip and is expected to arrive in the upcoming days. Its stated intention is to violate Israel's lawful naval blockade. This provocation poses a serious security threat and has the potential to further destabilize the region.

Any such attempt constitutes a breach of international law. The maritime blockade is announced and maintained in accordance with international law, as was recognized by the Secretary-General's Panel of Inquiry on the 31 May 2010 Flotilla Incident in its report of September 2011: "The naval blockade was imposed as a legitimate security measure in order to prevent weapons from entering Gaza by sea and its implementation complied with the requirements of international law".

In that report, the necessity of the blockade was recognized: "It [the blockade] was designed as one way to prevent weapons reaching Gaza by sea and to prevent such attacks to be launched from land ... a blockade in that circumstance is a legitimate exercise of the right of self-defence".

The maritime blockade has been proven to be necessary multiple times, as time and again Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist groups have used the sea to smuggle arms endangering Israeli and Palestinian civilians. Since 2009 Israel has intercepted three terror ships loaded with hundreds of tons of weaponry, including surface-to-surface rockets, mortar shells and hundreds of thousands of rounds of ammunition.

The upcoming flotilla claims to be of a humanitarian nature but will do nothing to help the people of Gaza. Israel is committed to providing and facilitating entry of necessary humanitarian assistance to Gaza and invites any party interested in providing such aid to do so in coordination with the Israeli authorities through the Ashdod port.

Israel has a duty to protect its citizens and prevent weapons from reaching the hands of terrorists. Any vessel attempting to enter the maritime zone adjacent to the Gaza Strip will be considered in violation of the maritime blockade. Israeli authorities will take all the necessary measures to prevent all vessels from approaching this area, in accordance with international law.

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Previous experience has taught us that such flagrant attempts to violate international law can lead to violence. On 27 May 2011 the Secretary-General expressed his belief that "assistance and goods destined to Gaza should be channelled through legitimate crossings and established Channels", making clear that flotillas have the "potential to escalate into violent conflict". Such a clear statement is needed today.

I call upon you to publically and unequivocally condemn this provocation, and to call on the flotilla's organizers to cease their reckless and destructive activities immediately. Failure to make such a statement will put lives in danger. The responsibility for preventing this foreseeable outcome rests with the United Nations.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter distributed as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Ron **Prosor**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative